

THE GOOD LIFE – LOVE MERCY

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Message Study Guide

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This week, we're going to look at Micah 6:8 (NKJV) again and see what God says about mercy.

Micah 6:8 NKJV

He has shown you, O man, what *is* good;
And what does the LORD require of you
But to do justly,
To love mercy,
And to walk humbly with your God?

1. What is mercy?

-Mercy: to be forgiven, to not get what you deserve

The Bible says we deserve to be punished for the things we do wrong. The Bible also says that if we are sorry for the things we have done wrong, and believe in Jesus, God will forgive us of the things we do wrong. We don't deserve to be forgiven we deserve to be punished. But God shows mercy to us and doesn't give us what we deserve, punishment, he gives us what we don't deserve, mercy and forgiveness.

Suppose you were to steal something from a store. What should happen to you? You should go to jail. But suppose you went to the store and said you were sorry and gave back the thing you stole. The owner of the store could show you mercy and forgiveness and not call the police. You deserve to go to jail. Because of mercy, you are forgiven. How would that make you feel? Would you love mercy if you were forgiven?

2. How do I love mercy?

One way is by being grateful and saying "Thank-you!" when someone is forgiving to you. That will encourage them to show mercy to somebody else in the future. Does anyone like forgiveness? You'll never love forgiveness until you understand how much you've been forgiven.

Telling others they did the right thing to not hold a grudge is another way to show your love for mercy. I will often say to someone, "God bless you for doing (whatever it was that the person did)." By saying that (whether or not the person is a Christian) you encourage that person to do more acts of mercy. In that way you show that you love mercy. You can tell stories to others about how someone was merciful or forgiving to you. Also, you can tell others about how God has forgiven you, has shown mercy to you.

3. How do I show mercy to other people?

Being patient with others, even when it is hard is a great way to show mercy. The Bible says in Matthew 5:9 "Blessed are the merciful for they will be shown mercy." They will be shown mercy by whom? They will be shown mercy by God. So by you showing mercy, being forgiving of other people, you are actually not only helping the other person, you are helping yourself. It seems that God is watching you to see if you show mercy so he can show mercy to you.

Read Matthew 9:13 "But go and learn what this means...I desire mercy not sacrifice." We sometimes get this backward. We think God wants us to not do things so he will be happy with us. So we don't smoke, or don't drink, or don't eat some kinds of foods because we think that makes God happy. We end up walking around with sad faces thinking about all the things we don't do. Many people who aren't Christians think that Christians are people who just don't do things. They think we are against having fun and judgmental of others because of all the things that we don't do. But God doesn't want us to be known by what we don't do, the sacrifices we make (although many of them might be good). He wants us to be known by the way we show mercy to people who offend us, the way we love and forgive other people. So if somebody does something unkind to me and I don't respond back by being unkind, I show mercy to someone else, and do what God wants me to do. In many ways, when I show mercy to other people, when I forgive them, I am like God! I get to be like God to other people!

We are MERCY.

4. We show our love to God by what we do for/to other people.

Once again, God tells us what he wants us to do for HIM. He wants us to "love mercy" like Micah 6:8 says. He says he wants us to do mercy rather than sacrifice. So we get to show love to God, for God by what we do to and for other people. God tells me, "You want to make me happy? Show mercy to other people." That is good and it is what God wants us to do.

5. Why would I love mercy?

I will love mercy if I have experienced mercy...if I have been shown or have experienced mercy, I can't help but love mercy. As a Christian, I know what it is like to be stuck in sin and then to be shown mercy and forgiveness. The way that forgiveness and mercy makes me feel should help me to want to have other people feel the same way when I show them mercy and forgiveness.

I will love mercy if I understand mercy...it is either mercy or punishment, those are the two options. I don't want to be punished and neither does anyone else. If I understand this I will love mercy.

I will love mercy if I want others to know about and receive God's mercy...How will people believe me that God has forgiven me and has shown me mercy if I don't forgive them and show mercy to them as well? I can't love mercy just for me and not for other people.

I will love mercy if I want to be shown mercy...if I want to have other people show mercy to me, I have to show it to them.

I will love mercy if I accept God's mercy and give myself to Him. Romans 6:13 says "Offer yourself to God as those who have been brought from death to life." If I reject God, I reject God's mercy. It is as if I say to God, "I don't want you to forgive me, I want you to punish me." As a Christian I understand that because of the wrong things I have done, I deserve to be punished. Because God has shown me mercy and not punished me as I deserve, I am very grateful. My way of saying thank-you is to give myself to God. I give myself to God by loving mercy and doing mercy to others.

We are to be KIND to people.

It is interesting that James 1:27 says "True worship is to look after widows and orphans..." That is, I worship God by showing mercy to other people. I personally think that God would prefer the worship of me not thinking about myself all the time and thinking about others, helping them, forgiving them, over me just singing songs about Him, singing songs about the wonderful things he has done. It is easy for me to sing songs, it really doesn't require much of me. But taking care of widows and orphans, showing mercy to others is a difficult and messy business.

In other words, to love and do for others, is to act like God acts toward you. To love mercy is to love the way God loves you and to do mercy is to be like God to other people.

QUOTE

"When I was young I admired intelligent people. Now that I am old, I admire kind people."

Let's look at Hosea 6:6 (NLT):

I want you to show love,
not offer sacrifices.

I want you to know me,
more than I want burnt offerings.

The words "love" and "mercy" are interchanged here. The original Hebrew word is "mercy," but the NLT uses the word "love". This is one of numerous examples of how love and mercy are connected. You cannot show mercy to someone without expressing love. It is impossible. Sure, you can do things for them out of duty, but you'll never know mercy till you begin to love people.

God says he wants us to show love/mercy. He's tired of our sacrifices – they are easy. It is easy to go to church. It is easy to lift hands in worship. But it takes more effort to get right in the middle of someone's circumstance and extend the love of Christ to them. That is where the Christian rubber meets the worldly road! He continues that we should know him. If you get to know God, then you know He is full of compassion and mercy. He is full of mercy and grace. Getting to know Him makes us more merciful. If you lack mercy, you need to get to know

God better. If you know someone in need but haven't shown them mercy yet, it may be because you don't see the heart of the Father towards them. You are the salt and light. You are the extension of the Father's hands. Christ lives and should move in you.

I asked my daughter tonight what a stop sign said. She said, "STOP". I said, "what if you know to stop but don't do it?" She responded with noises that resembled a car crash. When you know what to do and even know the source (Jesus) of mercy and still don't do it – for the Christian, it is sin – (James 4:17). Now, you can't just go do it because you know you have to. That would be a duty or job. Let it be your joy to serve and show mercy to others because of the mercy expressed to you on the Cross.

QUOTE

"Biblical orthodoxy without compassion is surely the ugliest thing in the world."

Simply put, that quote means organized religion without the acts of Christ is ugly. That is what turns people off to Christianity – religious people who ignore needs and people that seek mercy.

Matthew 9:9-13 NLT

As Jesus was walking along, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at his tax collector's booth. "Follow me and be my disciple," Jesus said to him. So Matthew got up and followed him.

Later, Matthew invited Jesus and his disciples to his home as dinner guests, along with many tax collectors and other disreputable sinners. But when the Pharisees saw this, they asked his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with such scum?"

When Jesus heard this, he said, "Healthy people don't need a doctor—sick people do." Then he added, "Now go and learn the meaning of this Scripture: 'I want you to show mercy, not offer sacrifices.' For I have come to call not those who think they are righteous, but those who know they are sinners."

Jesus ate with sinners – the Pharisees called them scum. I've seen some Christians turn their nose at some people in the body because of their past or even present situations. They look at themselves "better than" the others and look down on them. Shouldn't people with problems be in church?

The other day, I had someone approach me about a couple that goes to our church. This person isn't part of our church and was asking me about something this couple had done. This person said, "They did this and go to church. I can't believe it. Church people shouldn't act that way." I asked him if he had ever messed up and he said of course. I told him what they had done was not to be excused – it should be repented. But this couple had only been in church for about one month IN THEIR WHOLE LIFE. I asked him if he had approached them about it and he said no. Isn't that the way it is sometimes – people talk about you but don't care enough to really approach you and help you correct your situation and become more like Christ. This is how disciples are made – when more mature believers model and teach those younger in

the faith. It almost came across that if you go to church (not if you were a Christian) that you were not allowed to mess up or have imperfections. We should come along side those struggling in the Faith and teach them the ways of the Lord.

Jesus was the Great Physician and came for the sick – those who mess up and sin. He came for those who don't have it all together. He went on to say that he didn't come for those who think they are righteous, but those who know they are sinners. I love it when people confess their sins. I love it when they are gut-level honest. What they confess shouldn't shock us, it should make us rejoice! They are confessing – becoming vulnerable and transparent. This is the beginning of true repentance. Jesus loves it when we repent and are not prideful.

When was the last time you were gut-level honest about your life? When was the last time you were transparent with someone who wanted you to look like Christ?

We should extend mercy to others and go as far as to try and bring them back to the Lord. We should be confronting people in their sin – this is mercy. We should hold people accountable to what the Word says – this is mercy. Look at this scripture:

James 5:19-20 NIV

My brothers, if one of you should wander from the truth and someone should bring him back, remember this: Whoever turns a sinner from the error of his way will save him from death and cover over a multitude of sins.

We should go after people who stray. Sadly, some Christians don't. They just sit around and ask questions like, "I wonder what ever happened to....?" We should call those who don't show up a church. If someone messes up or sins, we should lovingly confront them (most of the time privately) and show them the "error of his way". The bible says this will save him from death. If we love them, we'll go after them. **WE WON'T LET THEM SLIP THROUGH THE CRACKS!**

Read this story and then ask yourself the questions that follow it.

Luke 10:25-37 NKJV

And behold, a certain lawyer stood up and tested Him, saying, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?"

He said to him, "What is written in the law? What is your reading of it?"

So he answered and said, "'You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind,' and 'your neighbor as yourself.'"

And He said to him, "You have answered rightly; do this and you will live."

But he, wanting to justify himself, said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"

Then Jesus answered and said: "A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, who stripped him of his clothing, wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a certain priest came down that road. And when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. Likewise a Levite, when he arrived at the place, came and looked, and passed by on the other side. But a certain Samaritan,

as he journeyed, came where he was. And when he saw him, he had compassion. So he went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine; and he set him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. On the next day, when he departed, he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said to him, 'Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I come again, I will repay you.' So which of these three do you think was neighbor to him who fell among the thieves?"

And he said, "He who showed mercy on him."

Then Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise."

Questions:

1. Are you like the Levite? Have you just abandoned people who needed mercy and left them for dead (spiritually speaking).
2. Are you like the priest? Religious. You know you should, but you don't.
3. Are you like the Samaritan? How have you gone the extra mile with someone and showed them mercy. A handout is doing something. Mercy is doing everything you possibly can.
4. Jesus said go and do likewise. Have you? How will you?

2 QUESTIONS:

1. Is your Christianity defined by LOVE OF THE LAW?

A lot of the time, we make up laws that aren't even in the Bible. Sometimes they concern clothing restrictions (I'm not talking about modesty and virtue here). Other times they are about actions like not watching any TV because all TV is of the devil (a lot is). Legalism will kill your Christian faith.

Here are some signs of Legalism.

The Signs of Legalism

Is self-centered, not Christ-centered "Look what I have done." (Luke 18:9-14)

1. Emphasizes the externals and becomes preoccupied with trivial matters. (Matthew 23:5-6, 24-25)
2. Makes things other than God absolute. (Mark 7:5-9)
3. Obscures a clear view of God. (Matthew 23:13, 15)
4. Is insensitive to human need. (Mark 3:1-2; Luke 10:25-37)
5. Ignores individuality. (Matthew 23:4; 11:28-30)
6. Develops into a religion of experts. (Matthew 15:3-6; 23:3; 18:1-4)
7. Creates judgment and divisions. (Mark 11:15-18; Luke 20:19-20)
8. Always needs more interpretation. (Matthew 23:16-23)
9. Denies your freedom to make your own decisions based on your personal experience with God. (Mark 2:23-28; 3:1-7)

The Symptoms of Legalism

- **Self-punishment** - Legalists make vows not to sin. Then, when the vow is broken, they are plagued with guilt. Guilt drives them to perform acts of "penance" to undo the sin. The cycle goes on like this until either the sin is rationalized away ("I guess it's not really all that bad"), or the legalists concludes that there's just no hope for them ("hey, that's just the way I am--you'll just have to accept it"). \
- **Duty focus** - The Christian life is driven by a sense of obligation. Service to others or participation in fellowship is viewed as something we "have to do." Legalists often resent ministry, but at the same time, derive their identity from it because they get positive reinforcement.
- **Condemning others** - Legalists are able to see all too clearly the failures of others because they are so preoccupied with their own. It makes the flesh feel better to knock your neighbor down a few notches. They experience the momentary delusion of moral superiority.
- **Performance based faith** – Legalist want to please God by confirming others into their private image of what they think Christianity should look like. To them it is all about outward appearance and making the sheep conform to the look and attitude of the "approved image".

2. Is your Christianity defined by the LAW OF GOD?

The Law of Faith is belief that only God is righteous and merciful and that only He can provide the way of salvation for mankind. This plan of salvation from God was actually carried out when God the Son (Jesus) paid the requirements of the law for all on the cross. These who by faith believe God and accept the sacrifice He provided for mankind's sins will be saved. You see, God is interested in saving people who truly trust in Him. God is not interested in having people in His presence who think they got there by their own righteousness through following the letter of the law or by rituals of obedience.

- *Gal 3:24 Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.*
- *Gal 3:25 But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster.*
- *Rom 3:27 Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith.*
- *Gal 5:4 Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace.*

Ever heard of the golden rule? It is from the Bible, not something made up by some wise man.

Matthew 7:12 NLT

Do to others whatever you would like them to do to you. This is the essence of all that is taught in the law and the prophets.

Jesus did something radical here – he summed up the law of the prophets in a few words! God loves mercy more than law. If you keep every commandment but do not show mercy you have missed what God expressed through Jesus' sacrifice on the Cross.

Look up and read Luke 18:9-14 NLT

QUESTIONS:

- 1. How can you show mercy to others? Make a list and be specific.**
- 2. Are you weak in the area of showing mercy? Are you weak in the area of desiring mercy? (probably not) We all love to get mercy. If we love to get but don't love to give, then that is selfishness.**
- 3. What can you do to be less selfish and more giving to others?**
- 4. Are you selfish and sometimes judgmental of others who are in need of mercy?**